



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

QUESTION: The ceiling tile in my industrial facility (warehouse, production and offices) are stained as a result of water leaks from the roof. The ceiling tiles (originally white) are now stained with varying shades of gray, brown and black. Can the ceiling tiles be cleaned? Are there any problems associated with removal?

ANSWER: In contrast to what you may read on the internet, AET's professional opinion is that water stained ceiling tiles must be removed and not cleaned or painted over. Application of a bleach solution may lighten or eliminate the stain on the tile face, but water has penetrated and damaged the tile from the backing to the face.

AET's Recommended Course of Action:

1. *Test the stained tile(s)* to confirm it does not contain asbestos. Obtain sufficient representative quantity of samples to confirm negative results per EPA AHERA regulations.
2. *Treat the stained ceiling tiles* as potentially biological contaminated item. Both mold and bacteria can grow on the face and backing.
3. *Confirm the source of the stains* are they the result of a current/ongoing water leak (wet) or past event (dry after the water leak has been repaired)? The longer the tiles remains wet, the more likely mold and bacteria will grow.
4. *Remove/replace the tiles* under controlled conditions to minimize dust/debris. All work should be performed after business hours (primarily weekends). Workers should wear at minimum a dust mask respirator and long sleeved shirts.
5. *Plastic sheeting should be placed* on the floor and non-movable furniture where the tiles are being removed. A HEPA vacuum should be available for clean-up purposes. Wet wipe cleaning can be used for hard, non-porous items.
6. *Ceiling tiles should be removed* intact (when feasible) and placed in waste bags or plastic sheeting lined carts (with lids) for transport through an occupied building.
7. *Visually inspect all surfaces* to verify the extent of cleaning prior to re-occupancy of the work area.

Mold and bacteria will grow on wet ceiling tiles; Repeated cycles of wetting promotes rapid growth. Ceiling tiles contain fiberglass which is a lung, eye and skin irritant. Safe handling, transportation and replacement of stained ceiling tiles will ensure the health and safety of your work force.

When you need professional help or advice, email Alan Sutherland, CIH, CHMM at a.sutherland@aetinc.biz or call 610-891-0114. We provide nationwide services; phone consultations are free. Check out the full range of environmental contracting/consulting services we provide at our website www.aetinc.biz

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